

## Summer Car (and Driver) Care

It happens every year. Shortly after Memorial Day, give or take a couple of weeks, drivers start to lose their cool. The windows go up, the air conditioner goes on, and the light breezes of spring turn into the heat blast of summer.

For drivers, a scoop of chocolate-chip ice cream usually improves their attitude in a hurry. Your car, on the other hand, would probably enjoy a little more attention to potential maintenance problems.

**Radiator Review:** One of the main hazards of summer driving is overheating. It's easy to recognize when a breakdown may be brewing.

Check the radiator hoses regularly for bulges, small cuts, and cracks, especially after the rubber-hardening winter. In hot weather, pressure from the radiator can quickly turn a crack into a hole.

Belts can also take a beating over the winter. Loose belts can slip. Belts that are too tight can wear down quickly and snap.

Also be sure that you have got the right mixture of coolant and water in the radiator.

**Keep a clear view.** As long as you're under the hood, make sure the windshield wiper solvent reservoir is full. Dust and insects can block your vision on even the sunniest summer days. Also, check that your wiper blades don't streak. They can deteriorate over the winter. Going from extreme heat to heavy summer rains also wears them down quickly.

**Tire Troubles.** Extreme heat takes a toll on your tires too. Under-inflated tires will flex more in hot weather and build up pressure, increasing the chance of a blowout. For an accurate tire pressure reading, check your tires after they have been cool for several hours.

You should also take the time to check the tire walls and the tread surface as often as possible. Have a mechanic check for objects that may be stuck inside the tread and for proper wear and rotation.

**Other Pre- and Post-Trip Vehicle Inspections:** Check your vehicle's:



Brake lights and turn signals

Steering mechanism

Oil, brake, transmission and battery fluids

Rearview and sideview mirrors

Safety belts

Horn

Spare tire

One thing to point out is Murphy's Law -- that anything that can go wrong will go wrong!

Hot Heads Aren't Cool. The strain of hot weather is as tough on you as it is on your car. As you head into the hottest part of the year, here are a few tips to help keep you cool.

Drink plenty of liquids. Automotive fluids evaporate faster when it's warm. So do the liquids that cool your body. In peak heat, try to stop often for non-alcoholic cold drinks. Or keep a thermos of water with you on the road.

Open the window periodically. Today's cars are so airtight that over a period of time, the amount of oxygen inside the car can decrease. Let in some fresh air every so often -- even hot air from outside -- to help build up the oxygen level.

Think light. After a big meal, you tend to feel groggy and less alert. Lighter meals will help you keep your defenses up -- and your weight down.

Keep your composure. As the temperature rises, your attention span and tolerance toward other drivers gets shorter. Just try to relax. Getting steamed just makes it harder to think clearly and drive safely.

